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ABSTRACT

This document reviews effective teaching behaviors that have been identified through research. The four categories in which these behaviors are examined are instructional strategies, classroom management, the presentation of subject matter, and the establishment of an appropriate learning environment. These four categories also make up four of the five domains that the Texas Teacher Appraisal Instrument, outlined in this report, is designed to assess. The criteria used to measure teacher performance in each domain are identified and indicators used to determine the degree to which these criteria are met are listed. The fifth domain assessed covers professional growth and professional responsibilities outside the classroom. (PGD)

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INCREASING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS ON UNDERACHIEVING CAMPUSES

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REACH

REALISTIC EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT CAN HAPPEN

EA 018 879

Research Background

During the 1970s, researchers began to observe school classrooms hoping to discover what made some teachers more effective than others. Much of the previous work on teaching had focused on the personal characteristics of teachers or on patterns of classroom interaction; little relationship to student achievement was found. But the 70s research produced new information: consistent patterns of teacher behavior related to increased student achievement in reading and mathematics.

Because most of these studies were of elementary teachers in regular classrooms, the research suggestions are not necessarily appropriate to all grades and subjects. However, the research does support general guidelines drawn from practices seen in the classrooms of many effective teachers in numerous subjects and geographic and social settings.

The teacher behaviors discussed in this publication are an elaboration of the *Texas Teacher Appraisal Instrument* outlined on the reverse side. Research findings related to each teacher behavior included in the teacher appraisal instrument are annotated in a document titled *Texas Teacher Appraisal System.*

All teachers and administrators in accredited schools should have received these materials in orientation packets distributed to schools early this fall.

Instructional Strategies

Effective teachers keep student attention focused on the lesson and task. Student attention spans vary with age, the demands of the task, and the interest level of an activity. If students work with material actively, rather than passively listening to a teacher, student achievement is more likely to increase. To encourage active participation in class, teachers may vary materials and their level of difficulty, activities and grouping patterns.

Another strategy used by effective teachers to increase participation is to vary classroom interaction from teacher-led discussions, to question-and-answer segments, where the majority of questions asked are recall and review, and the pace of the class is brisk. The teacher makes sure all students take part, calling on volunteers and non-volunteers alike, in patterned sequences. All students are given adequate time to think before they answer. When higher order questions are asked, students are given enough time to expand their answers before another question is asked.

The effective teacher reads a class like an expert tracker, observing students working alone or in groups, and listening carefully to their answers. When suspected problems are identified, the teacher works with individuals or small groups, to review or reteach the problem area. Predominant themes in the classroom are (1) the teacher's expectation that all students can learn, and (2) the teacher's dedication to providing a task-oriented learning environment.

Classroom Management

Classroom management skills undergird a teacher's professional expertise. During the first weeks of school, the teacher spends extra time putting the system in place, teaching students the rules and procedures of the class, and explaining, modeling, and practicing procedures, particularly at the lower grades. Later, teachers depend upon that organizational system to be automatic, requiring little attention and little maintenance. Students know the routine so well that having a substitute does not disrupt daily operations.

Before class begins, the teacher makes sure that materials are available and seating arrangements are appropriate for the first activity. Before the lesson begins, the teacher secures the attention of all students. The pace of instruction is brisk; the focus is academic. Activities, explained in detail, are interesting, meaningful, and challenging. Seatwork activities and behavior are actively monitored. Transitions between activities are quick and smooth.

Effective teachers focus on strategies that prevent misbehavior. Students are aware of expectations for acceptable classroom behavior. Students who begin to stray from assignments are redirected. However, misbehavior sometimes occurs despite the best preventatives. Effective teachers respond quickly, citing the offender and the broken rule without embarrassing the student. Efficient classroom management is not a goal in itself. The goal is freedom for both the teacher and students to focus on learning.

Presentation of Subject Matter

Skill in classroom management will not ensure student achievement. That skill must be accompanied by skill in presenting subject matter. The effective teacher begins the lesson by stating the objectives or goals of the lesson. Tasks and activities are sequenced appropriately so that students have the prerequisite knowledge and skills to anchor new information. Effective teachers do not simply present information; they elaborate critical features to help students separate new concepts or skills from previous learning.

Presenting subject matter clearly and accurately is a crucial teaching skill. Often this skill is achieved through the use of relevant examples, repetition of important points, and step-by-step explanations. Teachers should avoid imprecise or vague terms, distracting phrases, or qualifiers. Active student practice and questioning during direct instruction promote learning. Systematic feedback should include process feedback, as well as correct answers to questions.

Learning Environment

Effective teachers establish a work or task-oriented atmosphere that communicates confidence in the student's ability to be successful and in their own ability to teach the lesson. Activities are designed to ensure a high level of success, with the cognitive level of the task or question varied to meet individual student needs. Students need to stretch for success, and should be able to do so without fear of failing. Courtesy, respect, and encouragement serve as powerful models for students.

Students are motivated to achieve when activities are related to student interests and backgrounds, and when the value of the task is emphasized. Praise is given in such a manner that students know what is being reinforced. Specific praise to individual students is an effective motivator; privately communicated praise is more effective with older students.

Effective teachers strive for a balance of strengths in all of the areas described. A weakness in any area may seriously impair successful teaching. Problems with classroom

management, for example, will deteriorate the learning climate and limit the instructional strategies available to the teacher. While the ideas presented here are not definitive, they can serve as suitable guideposts for assessing teaching skills and for targeting those needing improvement.

Readings

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REACH

Volume I, Part 3 of 5
Texas Education Agency
Austin, Texas
GE6 300 06

New curriculum rules adopted by the State Board of Education in June 1986 require districts to provide alternative strategies or programs that will help low-achieving students succeed in school. REACH is intended to provide technical assistance information to complement this new district responsibility. Booklets describing successful models of alternative approaches to learning will be distributed during the 1986-87 school year. For information about this publication, contact the Division of Exemplary Programs, Texas Education Agency, at (512) 463-9661.

Texas Teacher Appraisal Instrument

The following outline of the state teacher appraisal instrument is the State Board of Education's response to legislation enacted in the special session of 1984. The criteria for appraising the performance of teachers are based on observable, job-related behavior, including the implementation of discipline management procedures. For the 1986-87 school year only, appraisal period one (fall) is considered formative and appraisal period two (spring) is considered summative.

DOMAIN I
Instructional Strategies

Criterion 1

Provides opportunities for students to participate actively and successfully.

Indicator

- appropriately varies activities
- interacts with students in group formats as appropriate
- solicits student participation
- extends student responses/contributions
- provides ample time for students to respond to teacher questions/solicitations and to consider content as it is presented
- implements instruction at an appropriate level of difficulty

Criterion 2

Evaluates and provides feedback on student progress during instruction.

Indicator

- communicates learning expectations
- monitors student performance in learning activities
- solicits responses or demonstrations from specific students for assessment purposes
- reinforces correct responses
- provides corrective feedback, or none needed
- reteaches, or none needed

DOMAIN II
Classroom Management and Organization

Criterion 3

Organizes materials and students.

Indicator

- secures student attention, or students are attending
- uses administrative procedures and routines which facilitate instruction
- gives clear administrative directions for classroom procedures or routines, or none needed
- maintains seating arrangements/grouping appropriate for the activity and the environment
- has materials, aids, and facilities ready for use

Criterion 4

Maximizes amount of time available for instruction.

Indicator

- begins promptly/avoids wasting time at the end of the instructional period
- implements appropriate sequence of activities
- maintains appropriate pace
- maintains focus
- keeps students engaged

Criterion 5

Manages student behavior.

Indicator

- specifies expectations for class behavior, or none needed
- uses techniques to prevent off-task behavior, or none needed
- uses techniques to redirect off-task behavior, or none needed
- uses techniques to stop inappropriate behavior, or none needed
- uses techniques to stop disruptive behavior, or none needed
- applies rules consistently and fairly
- reinforces appropriate behavior when appropriate

DOMAIN III
Presentation of Subject Matter

Criterion 6

Teaches for cognitive, affective, and/or psychomotor learning and transfer.

Indicator

- begins instruction/activity with an appropriate introduction
- presents information in an appropriate sequence

- relates lesson content to prior or future learning
- provides for definition of concepts and description of skills and/or attitudes and interests
- provides for elaboration of critical attributes of concepts, psychomotor skills, and/or attitudes and interests
- stresses generalization, principle, or rule as a relationship between or among concepts, skills, and/or attitudes/interests
- provides opportunities for transfer
- closes instruction appropriately

Criterion 7

Presents information accurately and clearly.

Indicator

- makes no significant errors
- uses vocabulary appropriate to students
- explains content and/or learning tasks clearly
- stresses important points and dimensions of content
- clarifies student misunderstanding, or none needed

Criterion 8

Uses acceptable communication skills.

Indicator

- uses correct grammar
- pronounces words correctly and clearly
- uses accurate language
- demonstrates skill in written communication

DOMAIN IV
Learning Environment

Criterion 9

Uses strategies to motivate students for learning.

Indicator

- relates content to student interests/ experiences
- emphasizes the value/importance of the activity or content
- reinforces learning efforts of students
- challenges students

Criterion 10

Maintains supportive environment.

Indicator

- avoids sarcasm and negative criticism
- establishes climate of courtesy and respect
- encourages slow and reluctant students
- provides praise for specific performance
- establishes and maintains positive rapport with students

DOMAIN V
Growth and Responsibilities

Criterion 11

Plans for and engages in professional development.

Indicator

- shows progress in completing professional growth requirements as agreed upon with appraiser(s), or none needed
- stays current in content taught
- stays current in instructional methodology

Criterion 12

Interacts and communicates effectively with parents.

Indicator

- initiates communications with parents about student performance and/or behavior when appropriate
- conducts parent-teacher conferences in accordance with local district policy
- reports student progress to parents in accordance with local district policy
- maintains confidentiality unless disclosure is required by law

Criterion 13

Complies with policies, operating procedures, and requirements.

Indicator

- follows statutory and Texas Education Agency regulations
- follows district and campus policies and procedures
- performs assigned professional duties
- follows district promotion/retention policy and procedures

Criterion 14

Promotes and evaluates student growth.

Indicator

- participates in campus goal-setting for student progress
- plans instruction in accordance with district requirements
- documents student progress
- maintains accurate records
- reports student progress at appropriate intervals